

*This chapter is dedicated  
to the ones I love.*



**S**taying physically fit is important. Unfortunately, people sometimes overdo it or have accidents. It's essential that you recognize and treat your injuries quickly and correctly.

## TYPES OF INJURIES

Injuries can be categorized as either traumatic or overuse. Let's examine these two types of injuries more closely.

### Traumatic Injuries

There are three types of traumatic injuries: strains, sprains and contusions.

- **Strains involve over-stretching or tearing of the muscles or tendons that attach muscle to bone. The most common strains are to the muscles and/or tendons of the calf, thigh and shoulder.**
- **Sprains are injuries to the ligaments that attach bone to bone, especially at joints. The most common sprains are "twisting injuries" that involve the ankle and knee.**
- **Contusions are bumps and bruises from getting hit, falling and crashing into objects or others.**

### Overuse Injuries

Overuse injuries are due to over-exercising (doing too much of a good thing). Body parts break down when doing an activity too much,

too soon or too long. Overuse injuries occur when the body doesn't have enough time to repair itself before more stress is applied.

Here are the most common overuse injuries:

- **kneecap pain of Patella Femoral Syndrome ("Runner's Knee")**
- **outside (lateral) knee pain of Iliotibial Band Syndrome**
- **elbow pain caused by lateral or medial epicondylitis ("Tennis Elbow" or "Golfer's Elbow")**
- **foot pain of plantar fasciitis with pain in the sole of the foot upon getting out of bed and after increased standing, walking or running**
- **shoulder pain of rotator cuff tendinitis and bursitis**

## RECOGNITION OF INJURY

People realize that they're injured when they have pain, deformity (swelling and/or something out of position) or the inability to move or use a body part correctly. Other sure signs of injury are limping, locking of a joint or being very weak or numb.

## FIRST AID AND MORE

If you're injured, the first thing that you should do is to call someone to be with you and to help you get first aid or medical attention (if needed). There's a great deal that you can do to help yourself or others with an injury.

## Chapter 12

## Injuries: Recognition, Prevention and Self-Treatment

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During the protected healing phase, over-the-counter medications, massage and rehabilitation exercises—including stretching and strengthening—can be done.

Almost all injuries respond well if simple measures are taken as soon as possible. Follow the guidelines of the acronym **PRICE IT**:

- **Protect.** You can avoid further injury or trauma by stopping the activity.
- **Rest.** Allow the injured area time to heal. You can stay in shape by substituting other activities that bypass the injured area. For example, if your arm is injured, you can still bicycle and walk or even do activities with your other arm.
- **Ice.** Applying crushed ice, ice packs or even a bag of frozen vegetables to the area for 20 minutes every hour or two helps to decrease pain and swelling. Massage the injured area with an ice cup. (You can make an ice cup by putting water in a small styrofoam cup and freezing it. By holding the cup, you won't freeze your fingers.) To decrease pain and swelling, massage the area for 5-10 minutes twice daily.
- **Compress.** Wrap new injuries with a damp elastic bandage over which ice can be applied to decrease pain and swelling. The damp bandage protects against cold injury to the skin but allows the cold to penetrate. A dry wrap would insulate the injury from the cold and decrease the effectiveness of the treatment.
- **Elevate.** This relies on the principle that water runs downhill. Elevating an injured area will prevent and treat abnormal swelling. Initially and frequently, keep the

area elevated as much as possible while swelling is still present.

- **Immobilize.** To protect the injury, secure the injured area with splinting, bracing, taping or any other method that's available. Once you resume activity, taping or bracing may allow for earlier protected use. Ankle bracing is particularly helpful in allowing an earlier return to activity and in preventing a new injury.
- **Treat.** Allowing adequate time for an injury to heal is essential. During the protected healing phase, over-the-counter medications, massage and rehabilitation exercises – including stretching and strengthening – can be done. These promote more rapid healing and prevent re-injury.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Remember, it's always easier to prevent an injury than to treat it. Practicing good nutrition, hydrating properly, performing stretching and strengthening exercises and using common sense so as not to overdo it or take unnecessary risks go a long way in preventing injuries.

Moderation is the key to be physically fit and injury free. Don't do too much. Don't do too little. Do just the right amount of exercise. Let's face it: The last thing that you want to do when you get fit is to get injured.

